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INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0362  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 7186  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 4975  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1595  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 002073

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/14/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: JAFFNA CALMER FOLLOWING AMBASSADOR'S  
VISIT

REF: A. COLOMBO 2060

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 2056

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Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr., for reasons 1.4(b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Pol FSN spoke December 14 with Mr. Remidious, Legal Advisor and Acting Coordinator of the Human Rights Commission in Jaffna, Government Agent K. Ganesh, and the Jaffna Bishop Rev. Thomas Savundranayagam. Each interlocutor pointed out that since Ambassador Blake's December 7 visit to Jaffna (reftels), during which he gave a strong human rights message to the commander of the security forces and later the Foreign Minister, there have been fewer killings and disappearances. This suggests that U.S. influence does have an impact and that the military does in fact bear responsibility for many human rights abuses. End Summary.

Ambassador Hears Evidence

[1](#)2. (C) During a December 7 day-trip to the Jaffna peninsula, which has been cut off by land from the rest of the island after fighting between Government security forces and the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) escalated on August 11, Ambassador Blake met with representatives from the independent Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission and Judicial Services Commission and the Bishop of Jaffna (reftels). These interlocutors described evidence of security forces colluding with paramilitary groups, including the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) and the LTTE-breakaway Karuna group, to abduct, kill, and intimidate civilians.

[1](#)3. (C) Having heard this evidence, Ambassador briefed Jaffna security forces commander Major General Chandrasiri at the end of his visit on December 7. Ambassador impressed upon the commander that a common theme of his meetings with civilians and civil authorities that day was the growing human rights problem with the security forces and the lack of investigation into these crimes. The military must take disciplinary action against human rights violators, he said, to ensure human security. Gen. Chandrasiri replied that he has "problems with certain groups operating here" and that "some elements are beyond my control," though he denied army involvement in so-called "white van" abductions. Ambassador

met Foreign Minister Managala Samaraweera on December 11 to convey a similar message of accountability (ref B).

Some Impact

14. (C) Pol FSN spoke December 14 with Mr. Remidious, Legal Advisor and Acting Coordinator of the Human Rights Commission in Jaffna, Government Agent K. Ganesh, and Jaffna Bishop Rev. Thomas Savundranayagam. All interlocutors pointed out that since Ambassador Blake's December 7 visit to Jaffna, there have been fewer killings and disappearances. Forty-seven civilians were killed in Jaffna in November and December and 74 disappeared in the same period prior to the Ambassador's visit, according to the Government Agent's figures (ref A).

15. (C) Remidious noted that after the Ambassador's December 7 visit, curfew hours have been changed from 6 p.m. through 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. to 5 a.m., allowing significantly increased civilian movement. As of December 14, there had been "only two killings" since the Ambassador's visit to Jaffna, he said, "before, there were at least three or four killings per day."

16. (C) Government Agent Ganesh told pol FSN the Ambassador's visit had "some impact; we will watch the situation for a few days." He claimed there had been fewer killings and that Jaffna is generally quiet.

17. (C) The Bishop told pol FSN that fishing restrictions had been relaxed as of December 11, when 250 fishermen were allowed to fish off the coast of Jaffna, and five trawlers were allowed to enter previously-restricted waters at night. He reported fewer killing and said SLA movement around Jaffna appeared to be less.

Are They Listening?

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18. (C) Comment: The Ambassador delivered strong messages to the Jaffna commander and the Foreign Minister regarding the need to discipline security forces. According to most civilian accounts, they appear to be operating with paramilitaries in Jaffna to perpetrate human rights abuses. The fact that killing and abduction numbers have dropped in the week since the Ambassador's visit and some livelihood restrictions have been lifted suggests that U.S. influence does have an impact. Of course, this could only be true if the military does, in fact, bear at least partial responsibility for human rights abuses. We will watch whether the improvement in the situation is durable, and maintain quiet by steady pressure, welcoming positive developments as they occur.

BLAKE